

THE INDYPENDENT

ISSUE #125, SEPTEMBER 12 – OCTOBER 22, 2008
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

Rebels on the Street

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TAKE A STAND, p3



Hip-hop group Rebel Diaz . PHOTO: THOMAS MARCZEWSKI



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THE INDYPENDENT

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The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 17 times a year on Fridays. Since 2000, more than 600 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have contributed their time and energy to this project. Winner of dozens of New York Independent Press Association awards, *The Indypendent* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging citizens to produce their own media. *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising from organizations with similar missions. Volunteers write and edit articles, take photographs, do design work and illustrations, help distribute papers, update the website and more! *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Indypendent is the newspaper project of the New York City Independent Media Center, which is affiliated with the global Indymedia movement (indymedia.org), an international network that is dedicated to fostering grassroots media production. NYC IMC sponsors three other projects, the children's newspaper *IndyKids*, the IndyVideo news team and the NYC IMC open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org). NYC IMC relies on volunteer participation and is open to anyone who is interested.

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community calendar

Please send event announcements to indyevents@gmail.com.
The next open editorial meeting for *The Indypendent* is Tuesday, Sept. 16 and Oct. 7, at 7pm at 4 W 43rd St, Room 311. All are welcome.

ONGOING THROUGH OCT 30

Tue-Fri 9:30am-5:30pm
Sat 10am-6pm • Free
EXHIBIT: INVASION 68: PRAGUE. Come see this one-time exhibition featuring Czech photographer Josef Koudelka's documentation of the Prague Spring. Aperture Gallery, 547 W 27th St magnum1968.com/detail/003.html

SAT SEP 13

8pm • Sliding scale \$6 to \$15
PANEL: "2008 ELECTIONS: WHAT'S REALLY AT STAKE?" Featuring today's leading journalists — Naomi Klein, Jeremy Scahill, Laura Flanders, Roberto Lovato and Malia Lazu — this crucial event will examine the political and economic impact of a McCain or Obama presidency, the role of media in the election and how concerned citizens should relate to the electoral process. *Special Advance Reception*: Meet the panelists and open bar. 6:30pm. Tickets start at \$35. The Great Hall at The Cooper Union, 7 E 7th St. Tickets: indypendent.org or 1-800-838-3006

SUN SEP 14

7pm • Suggested donation \$5
SCREENING: "BEYOND ELECTIONS." Join the filmmakers of this documentary exploring democratic practices across the Americas, including interviews with Amy Goodman and Eduardo Galeano. Bluestockings, 172 Allen St 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

MON SEP 15

7pm • Free
HEARING: SPEAK OUT FOR OUR SPOT ON THE PIER! The fight for a 24-hour LG-BTQ youth center on Pier 40 continues! Take action with FIERCE and allies by coming out to the next public hearing. Village Community School Auditorium, 272 W 10th St 646-336-6789 • fiercenyc.org

TUE SEP 16

8pm-10pm • Free
DISCUSSION: STUDENTS AND REVOLUTION. Join activist and political economist Michael Albert in discussing the role students have historically played in creating progressive social change and the task youth currently face in building a movement for a democratic, sustainable, just, and equitable society. Theresa Lang Student Center, 55 W 13th St • tinyurl.com/6hzw7e

WED SEP 17

6:30pm-9:30pm • Free
PANEL: COINTELPRO: THEN AND NOW. Learn about government repression, both in the past with the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and now in present. Hear about procedures in place to help activists continue their work. Brooklyn Law School, Subotnick Center, 250 Joralemon St robert.quackenbush@brooklaw.edu

THU SEP 18

7:30pm • Free
EVENT: BRECHT FORUM THIRD THURSDAYS. Join The Brecht Forum for their first Third Thursday of the fall with guest speaker Tariq Ali on the topic, "An Innocent Abroad: Barack Obama and U.S. Foreign Policy." The Brecht Forum, 451 West St 212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

FRI SEP 19

4pm-6pm • Free
FILM & DISCUSSION: "LIONESS." The story of "Team Lioness," a group of five women in the U.S. military who were sent to Iraq to ease tensions with civilians, only to face unintended consequences. Discussion with filmmakers after film. Cantor Film Center, 36 E 8th St 212-998-3759 • cmch.info@nyu.edu

SAT SEP 20

Noon-5pm • Free
VOLUNTEER: "TEAR UP THE PAVEMENT DAY!" Help tear up asphalt at Brook Park. Celebrate the autumnal equinox by allowing the earth and an underground brook to see the sun again. Brook Park, 141st Street & Brook Ave, South Bronx • friendsofbrookpark.org



EXHIBIT: INVASION 68: PRAGUE. Ongoing Tues-Sat through Oct. 30. (see calendar) Aperture Gallery, 547 W 27th St.

SAT-SUN SEP 20-21

Sat: 1pm & 3:30pm; Sun: 1:15pm • Free
FILM: "STEALING AMERICA: VOTE BY VOTE." A film about the secrets and anomalies that are integral to every level of the electoral process. Community Church of NY, 28 E 35th St (btwn Park & Madison) • 718-843-0515 russellbranca@yahoo.com

SUN SEP 21

2pm • Free
EVENT: 39th ANNUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN DAY PARADE. Bring your instruments and banners and march with The Freedom Fighters' Contingent. Celebrate fallen freedom fighters and demand amnesty for all U.S.-held political prisoners, POWs and exiles. 111th St & Adam Clayton Powell Blvd to 142nd St. safiyanuhfoundation.org

FRI SEP 26

4:30pm • Free
SPEAK-OUT: "NEW YORK SAYS NO TO BUDGET CUTS." Speak out against privatization of healthcare and support HR 676 and single-payer national healthcare. Join the Coalition Against Privatization for a rally. Governor's Office, 633 3rd Ave (at E 41st St)

SUN SEP 28

5pm-7pm • Free
READING: "BRAIN LIFTS." Join author Tom Savage as he reads from his latest book, *Brain Lifts*, along with Phyllis Wat. A Gathering of the Tribes, 285 E 3rd St, 2nd Fl. • 212-674-8262 • tribes.org

THU OCT 2

7:30pm • Sliding scale \$6 - \$15
PANEL DISCUSSION: ELECTION 2008: RACE, GENDER & THE MEDIA. Join FAIR and The Brecht Forum for a panel discussion with Laura Flanders, the host of GritTV and RadioNation; Glen Ford, the executive director of the Black Agenda Report; and *Guardian* and *The Nation* columnist Gary Younge. The Brecht Forum, 451 West St 212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

ON-GOING

MON, WED, FRI & SAT • 8am-5pm
UNION SQUARE COMPOST DROP-OFF Separate your food items from your garbage and help make compost! Union Square Green Market Composting Stand, 17th St and Park Ave South lesecologycenter.org • 212-477-4022

Next Issue: October 3

READER COMMENTS

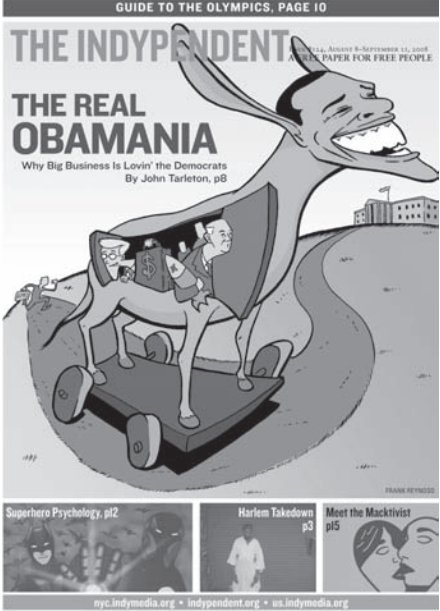
E-MAIL YOUR COMMENTS TO LETTERS@INDYPENDENT.ORG OR COMMENT AT INDYPENDENT.ORG

HEDGING THEIR BETS

Response to "Welcome to Donkeyland!" August 8:

It's certainly the case that elections are partly about different sectors of capital jostling for power (although it's also striking how much they hedge their bets: Energy — a classic Republican sector — has given \$1.3 million to Obama along with \$1.9 million to McCain, according to the diagram. The same is true of most other sectors, spread out between the two candidates). But it's a fallacy to believe this is the only or true meaning of elections. "Civil society" groups — labor unions, single issue advocacy (gun rights, abortion rights, health care, etc.), religious groups — are also part of each candidate's coalition. This also needs to be taken into account when activists approach this election.

—THREEHEGEMONS



COMPLETE CORPORATE NEGLIGENCE

Response to "Bhopal Takes Action," August 8:

Although the movement has achieved a lot these past few years, Union Carbide has yet to fully compensate the victims. The company's attitude towards the disaster exemplifies the complete corporate negligence of a company willing to set up a potentially dangerous chemical enterprise in the developing world. They deserve to pay for destroying peoples' livelihoods, their environment and their health. The water around the site is still contaminated, and yet the people have no choice but to drink it.

—ANONYMOUS

Continued on page 15

South Bronx Rhythm Resistance

By Timothy Murray

The legal struggle continues for South Bronx-based hip-hop activists Rodrigo and Gonzalo Venegas, who were aggressively arrested by New York Police Department officers June 18. The brothers, members of the popular group Rebel Diaz, said they were trying to help a street vendor on Southern Boulevard in Hunts Point who, they felt, was being harassed by police officers.

“We just kinda walked up on the situation that was happening in which the vendor was having his [fruit and vegetable] produce thrown away by the NYPD and the health department,” said Rodrigo, 27, who goes by the rap name RodStarz. “So our initial thing was to translate for the brother. He had his permit.”

Rodrigo said that at first the officers agreed, explaining that they were enforcing city health department violations. Soon after, he said that several cops became aggressive, eventually forcing them to the ground and handcuffing them.

Hip-hop activist and journalist Davey D commented on the June 18 incident on his blog, Hip Hop Daily News: “According to witnesses, when RodStarz and G1 [Gonzalo’s rap name] asked for badge numbers the police became agitated and turned around and started beating them with bully clubs [sic] and kicking them in full view of other vendors and people on the crowded street. The two were dragged off bloody, put into a police car ...”

Both Rodrigo and Gonzalo, 22, have been charged with two misdemeanors — obstruction of justice and resisting arrest. The initial charge of assault on a police officer was dropped after a cell phone video of the incident taken by a friend of Rebel Diaz on his cell phone was widely released. (See video: [youtube.com/watch?v=RJ-_1b6AO6w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ-_1b6AO6w)).

After spending ten hours in a 9-by-12-foot central booking holding room with 42 other inmates at the 41st Precinct, the brothers appeared in criminal court the following day.

“Our main thing is that this is stuff that happens in the South Bronx all the time,” Rodrigo said. “And more than anything we wanted to highlight that there’s a gentrification problem going on in the South Bronx. ... The police aren’t going to do a sweep of innocent vendors on their own,” Rodrigo continued. “Look at the South Bronx right now, they’re pushing it as ‘SoBro.’ And part of this gentrification process is cleaning out the street.”

LATE NIGHT SCARE

A subsequent event complicated matters. On June 24 around 2 a.m., Gonzalo said that three NYPD police officers in full uniform invaded his East Harlem studio without knocking or a warrant. He said that with weapons drawn, the officers forced him, his roommate and a friend to their knees, put guns in their faces and demanded to know who they were, accusing them of harboring a fugitive criminal suspect. Moments later, he said that the officers departed just as quickly as they had arrived, down a side stairway adjacent to the apartment. Once Gonzalo realized what had happened, he ran after the police and was able to discern two badge numbers. The Venegas brothers called several precincts, all of which were unwilling to claim the officers; they still wonder what really happened that evening.

“The questions as to why several armed police officers mysteriously and violently invaded my home without any clear legal justification remain unanswered,” said Gonzalo



REBELS FOR JUSTICE: Members of the South Bronx hip-hop group Rebel Diaz, brothers Gonzalo “G1” (left) and Rodrigo “RodStarz” (right) Venegas, rocked the house Sept. 7 at The Pyramid Club in the East Village. PHOTO: THOMAS MARCZEWSKI

in an official statement published the New York City Independent Media Center news-wire on June 25. “One is left only to think that the occurrences of this morning are not a coincidence of mistaken identity, but a direct response by the NYPD to an incident of police brutality I was involved in last week in the South Bronx.”

“We feel these are modern-day scare tactics,” Rodrigo said.

G1, RodStarz and Teresita Ayala (rap name “Lah Tere”) make up the hip-hop

group Rebel Diaz. The Venegas brothers were raised by Chilean political exiles on Chicago’s north side, and Ayala grew up in Humboldt Park, a primarily Dominican and Puerto Rican neighborhood in Chicago. They strongly identify with a long lineage of activist musicians.

“We follow a line of musical conviction,” Rodrigo reflected, “The Nueva Canción movement in Chile. Victor Jara. Silvio Rodriguez. We come from that history of struggle, even musically. Our work is a reflection of

what our roots are, which is resistance. That’s who we are.”

Rebel Diaz’s most recent song, “Bullpen Therapy,” sheds light on the politics of gentrification, which they believe fueled the June 18 incident.

“See let me break it down/Let’s keep it real simple/The vendor got harassed by the health official/The health official’s wishes were enforced by the commissioner/So the mayor and his investors can all get richer,” raps Gonzalo. Meanwhile on the track, Ayala croons an echoey, melancholic chorus: “They got me in handcuffs.”

Leah Horowitz, a criminal defense attorney with Bronx Defenders, filed for an “out-right dismissal” of the charges against the Venegas brothers at their Sept. 3 court hearing. She referenced scores of letters written in support of the duo attesting to their positive work in the community. Judge George Villegas adjourned the hearing and set the next date for Dec. 16.

NYPD public information officers failed to return calls requesting comment.

“Definitely for us, our home base is the SB, and that’s where we’re doing all our organizing work, Hunts Point, the poorest congressional district of the United States,” Rodrigo said. “Whatever the results of this case are against us, I think that we’re ready to stick to what is just and what we feel is right, and we have to help our vendors.”



Pedaling for Immigrant Rights

Texas resident Mario Castellon Leiva cruised through New York in late August on his nationwide bicycle tour to raise awareness about families affected by recent massive immigration raids.

“It’s an honor for me. I am not a politician, that I can help bring attention to immigration problems,” Leiva said, who is originally from El Salvador and now works at a factory in Dallas. “I am grateful with this country that it has given me the chance to live here, but at the same time, I would like that the chance that I have received here to be given to all the immigrants who come here to live.”

Leiva joined in a rally Aug. 22 in New York City to protest large-scale immigration raids and the hate crime trial in Pennsylvania, where three white teenagers beat a Mexican immigrant to death. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has raided meatpacking factories in Iowa and Mississippi in recent months, arresting hundreds of undocumented workers and leaving their families and children in a state of fear, with their fates uncertain. PHOTO: JAMIE LEHANE

Health Activism Takes Root

By Jaisal Noor

Third Root Community Health Center, which opened its doors Aug. 22 in Flatbush, Brooklyn, seeks to provide alternative healthcare services to the community at affordable prices.

“The current debate focuses around the healthcare system, which is only 100 to 150 years old,” says Third Root co-founder Jacoby Ballord. “We focus on healthcare solutions based on long-standing traditions. Rather than fighting for reforming the system, Third Root seeks to create an alternative to the system.”

Focusing both on prevention and the treatment of acute and chronic conditions, patrons can choose from massage therapy, community



LOCAL MEDICINE: Third Root Community Health Center co-founder John Halpin demonstrates acupuncture techniques on his colleague, Jacoby Ballord, Sept. 5. The Flatbush worker-owned clinic opened Aug. 22 and provides alternative healthcare services at sliding scale rates in Brooklyn. PHOTO: SOPHIE FORBES

and individual acupuncture, herbal medicine, nutritional counseling and yoga. Community health workshops are held on Saturdays and focus on a wide range of education services.

The center provides its services on a sliding scale, so members are only asked to pay what they can afford. For those who cannot afford to pay, community health scholarships are available to allow for free access to services. The center also seeks to offer services for marginalized and oppressed people, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, class, immigration status or age.

The cooperative healthcare center is owned and operated by its eight founding members. “Practitioners are owners of the business and share in responsibilities and decision-making processes,” says Ballord, who teaches yoga and serves as an herbalist and health educator.

In contrast to most corporate or nonprofit ventures, Third Root was financed by more than 20 small business loans, ranging from \$500 to \$5,000. These loans were taken mostly from friends, families and acquaintances interested in social justice work.

“We created a model appropriate for our community,” Ballord says. “Our hope is some of the model is replicated by others, while other elements must be tailored for individual communities.”

Third Root Community Health Center is located 380 Marlborough Road, near to the Cortelyou stop on the Q train in Brooklyn. For more information, thirdroot.org or 718-940-9343.

A NEW VISION,
SHATTERED



Khalil Gibran International Academy (KGIA) was the brainchild of New Visions for Public Schools, a nonprofit group that specializes in education reform. After the organization met with the Department of Education (DOE), the city’s immigrant affairs office and Arab-Americans in Brooklyn, Debbie Almontaser, a veteran New York City educator and interfaith community activist, was the leading choice to spearhead implementation of KGIA.

Chosen as the school’s founding principal, Almontaser put together an ethnically and professionally diverse team to help design the school. Almontaser says the goal was to get students to “see themselves as part of a bigger world.”

But she was forced to resign a few weeks before the school opened due to a media-sparked controversy touching on issues of terrorism and radical Islam.

Named after Lebanese-American poet Khalil Gibran, the school was quickly attacked after plans were publicly announced Feb. 12, 2007. Soon after, blogs and other media outlets, led by neoconservative author Daniel Pipes, started to attack the Brooklyn-based program. Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum, a think-tank that fights “radical Islam, whether terroristic or lawful,” also joined the advisory board of the “Stop the Madrassa Coalition,” which attempted to paint the school as a breeding ground for radical Islam.

In an article in the *New York Sun* entitled “A Madrassa Grows in Brooklyn,” Pipes claimed that KGIA would be “laden with pan-Arabist and Islamist baggage.” (KGIA planners said the school has never planned to teach the practice of Islam). Pipes said that Almontaser “has a record of extremist views” and that she implied “Arabs or Muslims ... are innocent of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001,” taking out of context Almontaser’s remark that “I don’t recognize the people who committed the attacks as either Arabs or Muslims.” She went on to say, “Those people who did it have stolen my identity as an Arab and have stolen my religion.”

The intense media focus on KGIA peaked when the *New York Post* picked up the story. The DOE pressured Almontaser to agree to an interview with the *Post*. In an Aug. 6, 2007, article, the *Post* declared that Almontaser “defended” the use of the word “intifada” on a t-shirt made by Arab Women Active in the Arts and Media (AWAAM), a group whose only connection to Almontaser was that she was on the board of a Yemeni-American organization that at times shared office space with AWAAM.

On Aug. 9, Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott, following what Almontaser says was a directive from Mayor Bloomberg, forced Almontaser to resign as KGIA principal, saying that either she or the academy had to go.

“That was the most horrendous and devastating 24 hours of my life,” Almonager says. “To experience working with people who admired me and respected me and who believed in me, and then just to see a complete shift, basically saying that ‘you’re the problem’ ... was absolutely devastating.”

City Pushes Arab-American School to the Brink

BY ALEX KANE

In the summer of 2007, Muhammed Fakir Shahada was looking for a New York City middle school for his daughter Serena, who was about to enter the sixth grade. After attending a fair for new middle schools that summer, Fakir, who wanted his 12-year-old daughter to learn Arabic, which most of his family speaks, settled on the Khalil Gibran International Academy (KGIA), the city’s first dual-language Arabic public school, then located in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn.

By the end of the school year, Fakir regretted his decision. “I kept telling my kid that [the school year] was going to get better, but it got worse,” he says. A year later, Fakir has pulled his daughter from KGIA, and this September Serena began seventh grade at a different school.

Designed to be a beacon of multiculturalism, KGIA was surrounded by controversy from its inception (see sidebar). Parents, students and educators say that inadequate classroom resources, an unresponsive school administration, lack of support from the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and teacher firings pushed the school to the brink of failure.

A group called Communities in Support of KGIA (CISKGIA) released a letter Sept. 2 charging the school was opening the 2008 school year “without its full Arabic language instruction, effective leadership, or any of its five original teachers or its social worker.”

CISKGIA, which describes itself as a coalition of “individuals and organizations from a multitude of communities and backgrounds,” had sent a letter to Mayor Michael Bloomberg and New York City School Chancellor Joel Kline last June lamenting the fact that many parents “are already pulling our children out of the school or are thinking of not returning next year” and noting that discipline problems among students caused by a poor learning environment “continue to go unaddressed.”

The June letter was also critical of the school’s leadership for “not exhibiting a commitment to the mission” of teaching Arabic language and culture: “Arabic language instruction has decreased to a little over two hours a week. We have seen little appreciation of Arabic language or culture within the school. There has not been a single cultural event where parents were invited to participate, and there are very few opportunities for our children to receive instruction about the culture.”

This was not how it was supposed to be. “Having an institution that teaches our kids Arabic is very important. ... This school is an opportunity for the enfranchisement of the whole community,” says Mona Eldahry, the founding director of Arab Women Active in the Arts and Media (AWAAM).

Mayor Bloomberg has continually praised the school, telling the *New York Times* that “having an Arabic dual-language school is a really important thing down the road. We need Arabic speakers in this city.”

But families of KGIA students say the city has let the school go down the drain.

“I [don’t want KGIA] to fail because I feel like if the school fails, it’s a failure to the Arabic community. ... I really don’t want to see racist people succeed ... in putting us down,” says Fatin Jarara, 19, a

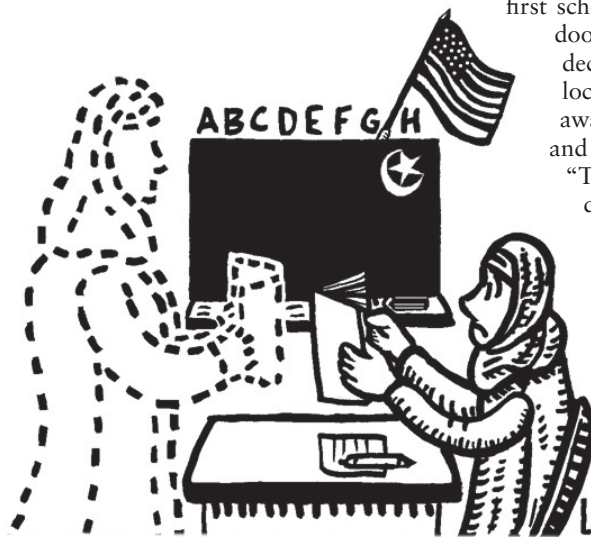
Brooklyn College education major who was on KGIA’s design team and whose sister attended KGIA.

“Why did [the DOE] even accept [KGIA] if they were just going to turn their backs on us?” Jarara says.

The student body has changed as the school enters its second year. School supporters say many of the 58 original students have not returned, and the DOE did not return calls inquiring about how many students have failed to return.

Newspaper reports indicate that enrollment has increased from 60 to 90 students, as the sixth-grade-only school has expanded to include seventh-graders, but it’s still below its capacity of 120.

Arguably KGIA’s biggest problem last year was the lack of a stable administration. After a brief interim principalship, the city hired Holly Anne Reichert as principal in January 2008.



Supporters of the school say she is unqualified to head the school as she knows little Arabic. They also say she has presided over the continuing deterioration of KGIA.

During a July 31 press conference, Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott defended Reichert and KGIA saying, “Just because [someone] cannot speak a language of a dual-language school doesn’t detract away from the purpose of that school.”

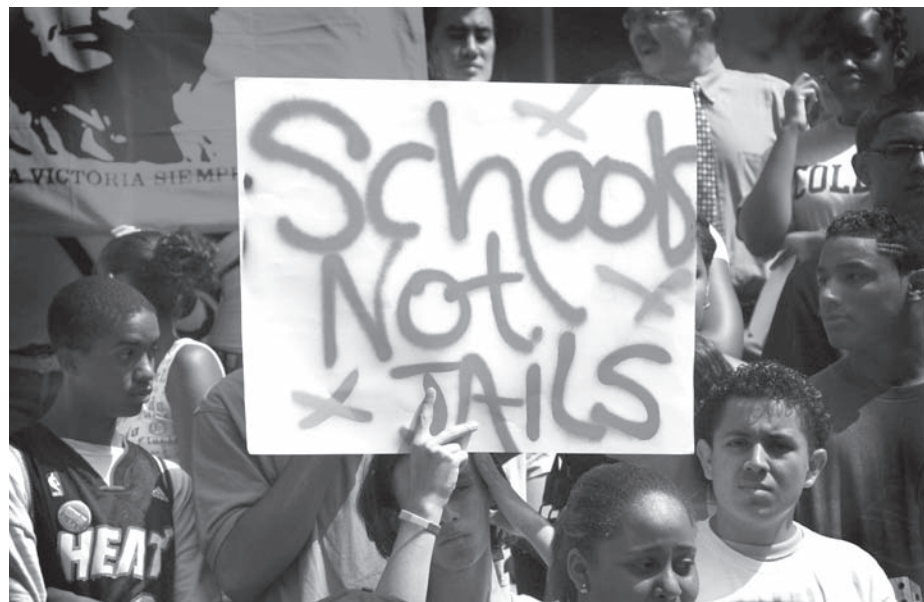
As for the firings, AWAAM says that the five original teachers and social worker were terminated without cause. Some supporters charge that the teachers may have been fired because they were critical of the school’s performance.

Fakir says he has tried to contact Reichert about the firings, but has received no answer. “The school’s response to everything [is that] they don’t give an answer, and they brush the parents off,” Fakir says.

Critics say that near the end of KGIA’s first school year, the DOE, in a closed-door meeting with no parental input, decided to move the school to a new location in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, away from public transportation and Arab-American communities.

“The new site for the school was determined based on available facilities close to the area where the school was located for the first year,” says Melody Meyer, a deputy press secretary for the DOE, adding that the original location was “temporary” and the new location will serve students better.

Protesting Harsh School Policing



OFF OUR BACKS!: More than 100 students, parents, city politicians and educators rallied on the steps of City Hall Aug. 14 in support of new legislation that would reform the heavy-handed policing of New York City schools. The School Safety Act, which has 24 co-sponsors, would expand the jurisdiction of the Civilian Complaint Review Board to include complaints against School Security Agents (SSAs) and NYPD employees who patrol the schools and have the power to frisk, search and arrest students. “We are asking for accountability and transparency,” said Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito (D-East Harlem). The bill was spurred by the growing trend of student misbehavior being criminalized rather than being treated as a disciplinary matter for schools to handle both in New York and nationwide. “This [the Student Safety Act] will change environments that are more like prisons, than like schools,” said Damon Hewitt from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

PHOTO: CHRIS CASCARANO

—TO READ THE FULL STORY BY CHRIS CASCARANO AND JOHN TARLETON, VISIT INDYPENDENT.ORG.

NY State Considers ‘Bigger, Better Bottle Bill’

By Chris Cascarano

Some of New York’s hardest working environmentalists don’t do it for cleaner streets, clearer skies, or to reduce oil consumption — they do it to survive.

Every morning, Karl Zatorski, a 68-year-old retiree on the Lower East Side, picks through neighborhood trash bins for bottles and cans that can be redeemed for 5-cent deposits. By the end of the day, he says, he earns between \$25 and \$35, a major supplement to the meager \$583 he collects each month from Social Security.

“People say, ‘you’re not the guy I’d expect to be recycling,’ and I’m not,” says Zatorski. “The reason I recycle is because I have to. I need to eat.”

Zatorski’s bounty has decreased over the years. Non-carbonated beverages such as bottled water, iced tea and sports drinks — a minute fraction of the industry when New York State enacted its bottle-deposit law in 1982 — now make up 30 percent of the beverage market. As New York doesn’t require deposits on those bottles, it has also caused increased litter and billions of bottles being trashed rather than recycled. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), three billion non-carbonated beverage containers go into the trash each year.

Environmentalists may be closer than ever to changing this.

For the past six years, several environmental groups have been prodding Albany to pass the “Bigger Better Bottle Bill.” It would expand the state’s Returnable Containers Act to require deposits on all glass, metal and plastic beverage containers, not just beer and soda bottles and cans. It would also funnel money from unclaimed deposits to the state Environmental Protection Fund.

The bill has been passed several times by the Democratic-majority state Assembly and endorsed by Gov. David Paterson, but has

“I think Senator Bruno was too entrenched in his position on the bill to let it pass,” says Laura Haight, senior environmental associate at the New York Public Interest Research Group. “But it has become apparent that it is possible to pass the bill with Senator Skelos in office.”

Skelos’s office said they have not begun hashing out the bill’s details yet, but are open to negotiations. “What we’ve said is that sides should come together to develop an approach that balances the interests of the environmental community and that of consumers who are faced with ever-increasing costs,” says spokesperson Scott Reif.

One possible negotiation could be requiring deposits on only some bottles and cans other than beer and soda, such as just water bottles, a step some other states have taken. Of the 11 states that have bottle bills, Delaware, California, Connecticut and Maine include at least water bottles in addition to carbonated beverages.

“A compromise has obviously never been what we want,” says Haight, “but it could be a good first step. Water bottles take up some 60 percent of the non-carbonated beverage market.”

One group opposing the bill is an organization of grocers and beverage companies, New Yorkers for Real Recycling Reform, which sees better curbside recycling as the solution for litter. The group’s website cites probable price increases and the “inconvenience” of storing and carrying empty bottles, and says the bill may not do much for the environment.

Since the Returnable Container Act’s enactment 26 years ago, collectors like Zatorski, the homeless, immigrants, and the just plain thrifty have taken advantage of the bill to make a little extra cash. The DEC estimates that the law has reduced roadside litter by 70 percent, prevented the production of 200,000 metric tons of greenhouse gasses, and saved 52 billion barrels of oil annually.



RECYCLING PAYS OFF: Chinese immigrants enter a day’s bounty of cans and bottles into an automatic redemption machine outside a Key Food grocery store on East 4th Street and Avenue A in the East Village. Devoted bottle and can collectors can earn up to \$60 each day and help keep New York streets litter-free. PHOTO: CHRIS CASCARANO

never received the okay from the Republican-dominated state Senate. Beverage companies, grocers and consumer advocates who fear price increases have lobbied against the bill.

Next year may be different. One of the bill’s staunch opponents, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno (R-Rensselaer), left office in June. His replacement, Sen. Dean Skelos (R-Nassau), may be more sympathetic. And the Democrats are two seats away from a majority in the Senate.

“It’s a no-brainer to pass this bill, in terms of its environmental benefits,” says Haight. “But the opposition is still very strong.”

Zatorski, who once used can collecting to pull himself out of homelessness, said he likes the environmental benefits of requiring deposits on more bottles, but what he likes most is the little extra cash he could make.

“I sure would like an extra \$5 or \$10 a day,” Zatorski says. “I really hope it passes.”

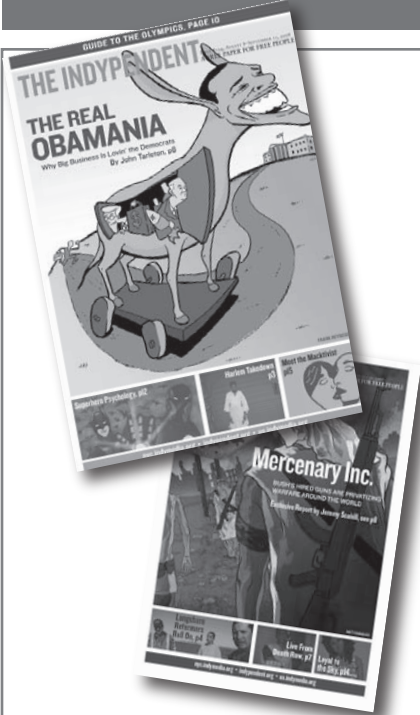
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Developer Retreats on Fort Greene Plan



DEMOLITION DRAMA — DEVELOPING INJUSTICE: (Bottom photo) Longtime Fort Greene residents Cynthia Butts (left) and Della Dorsett (right) demand accountability about a block-long development and are members of the group, Families United for Racial and Economic Equality. (Above right) A block on Myrtle Avenue was demolished November 2007, leaving residents without local services. (Above left) Dorsett now travels blocks down Myrtle Avenue to get groceries.

By the Numbers:

An April 2008 study by The Food Trust, “The Need for More Supermarkets in New York City,” found that there is an urgent need for more affordable, nutritious food in many low-income neighborhoods, which often are the same communities who battle higher incidences of diabetes.

- 33%** The percentage decrease in the number of grocery stores in New York City in the last six years.
- 30%** Percentage difference in the number of supermarkets in the poorest neighborhoods versus the number in highest-income neighborhoods in a nationwide study of metropolitan areas in 2006.
- 32%** Percent increase in fruit and vegetables eaten for each additional supermarket in a community.
- 700,000** Estimated number of New Yorkers who have diabetes.

18 Number of New York neighborhoods identified where people have low incomes and insufficient access to a supermarket.

Brooklyn: East New York, Brownsville, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, Bushwick

The Bronx: Hunts Point, Mott Haven, Melrose, West Concourse, Highbridge

Queens: Jamaica, Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, The Rockaways

Manhattan: Washington Heights, East Harlem, Central Harlem

Staten Island: North Shore

SOURCE: thefoodtrust.org

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JAMIE LEHANE

For her entire life, Cynthia Butts, 53, has lived in a tall red brick building on Myrtle Avenue in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. The block she calls home is now defined by an unusual silence. Across the street from her residential complex is a vacant lot where a lively stretch of commercial stores and restaurants once stood.

“Everything has changed so drastically,” says Butts, a resident of the 1,636-unit Walt Whitman complex at 287 Myrtle Avenue near Flatbush Extension.

It will be a year this November since billionaire — and possible mayoral candidate — John Catsimatidis tore down an entire block on Myrtle Avenue between Navy and Prince Streets. His original plan was to build 660 luxury condominiums with 200 affordable units and ground-floor businesses. But Catsimatidis has already abandoned plans to build the affordable housing units.

What was lost was significant for the local community of more than 4,200 people — an Associated supermarket, a newly constructed Duane Reade, a laundromat, restaurants and a bodega.

“It’s not fair when we don’t have a say on what is going on in our community,” says Butts, who volunteers with Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), a group bringing attention to the dismantling and gentrification of many communities in Brooklyn. The demolition has been devastating to residents who relied on the block as a community business center.

Residents now have to walk more than six blocks up Myrtle Avenue to obtain goods and services, including food from the now nearest grocery store, Bravo.

“In the chair here, it takes about 10 minutes,” says Della Dorsett, 67, who travels by electric wheelchair and can only walk short distances. “But look at my other friend who has a home attendant that has to push her. That’s not good. That’s why we want to get something that’s convenient for us down here,” says Dorsett, also a member of FUREE. “If I don’t have anyone to help me, then I got to bag it in the backpack on the back of the chair, and that’s not good for the chair.”

Dorsett is one of many living in the neigh-

borhood who has a disability.

“As you can see, a lot of people, handicapped people, wheelbound people, have to go out of their way to get basic things,” Butts says. “I don’t think it is fair at all. Especially when you have a big empty lot and are not doing anything.”

Fort Greene is just one out of many neighborhoods in the five boroughs that have recently lost grocery stores. A recent report by The Food Trust found that in the last six years, New York City has lost one-third of its grocery stores — predominantly affecting lower-income neighborhoods (*See infobox.*)

Catsimatidis, who is the owner of the high-end Gristedes supermarket chain, said he would begin construction immediately after the demolitions were finished in late 2007 but construction has yet to begin.

Catsimatidis told the *New York Daily News* in March, “If we start digging in about a month or two, [the supermarket and drugstore] should be done within a year if the world doesn’t fall apart with the real estate market.”

However, now there is speculation that the project will not even be built. “The developer has hinted that he may deep-freeze the huge project because the real estate market is going south,” someone wrote on the blog curbed.com.

“He said he isn’t going to do affordable housing, but what is affordable housing, affordable for whom?” Butts says. “We have to ask questions about what do you consider affordable housing, what range, in what price range.”

Several new condo buildings have gone up in the surrounding area in the last several years, giving long-time residents like Butts and Dorsett the feeling that people like them are no longer welcome. Butts says that many people in the neighborhood have already moved to other communities.

“They are tearing things down and building things up, but who is moving in?” Butts says. “When you look around, you notice that we have a lot of vacancies.”

Meanwhile, members of FUREE have been trying to arrange a meeting with Catsimatidis for more than a year, in order to voice their concerns about still not having a grocery store, as well as the increase in luxury condos in the area.

BUDGET: A Wake-Up Call to WBAI Listeners

BY BENNETT BAUMER

The venerable progressive radio station 99.5FM WBAI has gone into yet another month-long fundraising drive this September as bitter infighting continues on the station’s ruling Listener Station Board (LSB) and the budget deficits mount. The middle-of-the-dial New York City station has been running a roughly half-a-million dollar deficit over the past five fiscal years and owes “six digits” to its parent organization, Pacifica Radio, according to multiple board members at an August meeting.

“We’re in major negotiations with Pacifica over this,” said Mitchel Cohen, WBAI LSB chairperson, who believes WBAI owes

at least \$300,000. “WBAI has been unfairly billed and we’re asking for a line-by-line accounting.”

The first public radio network in the nation, Pacifica Radio was founded in 1946 by two pacifists and has five member stations, including WBAI. Pacifica Radio does not accept corporate donations and instead relies on listener support to operate and community members to produce programming. WBAI and Pacifica Radio have a troubled recent history, squabbling over money and governance structure.

WBAI’s total budget in fiscal year 2008 was \$2.4 million, and the LSB has yet to approve the 2009 budget. The station is weighted down by a heavy rent burden at its 120 Wall Street headquarters, paying

\$277,969 a year. And it costs a pretty penny, \$350,778, to transmit the signal from the Empire State Building.

Further complicating matters, of the \$2.1 million projected listener donations in 2009, the station will lose a significant amount to uncollected contributions. Station board member Steve Brown estimated that the station might only collect 68 to 72 percent of pledged donations. Although Brown, a millionaire direct mail marketing executive, wants the station to come up with different fundraising strategies, the station will be rolling out yet another four-week fundraising drive from Sept. 8 to Oct. 4. Even with multiple fundraisers a year, there is discussion on the LSB of layoffs at WBAI.

The listener board has been contested real

estate between two rival factions since what is known as the 2000 Christmas Eve weekend “coup,” which lead to the firings or resignations of many progressive radio hosts including *Democracy Now!*’s Juan Gonzalez.

Listeners should be concerned about the financial fiasco. The most recent Sept. 3 LSB meeting — which drew only 15 members of the public — was delayed half an hour in order to reach quorum, then quickly descended into hour-long bickering over the agenda, Robert’s Rules of Order (which outlines meeting process) and what constituted an excused absence.

Finally, after almost two and a half hours of thinly veiled contempt and bickering, the LSB meeting began addressing the most pressing issue — the budget.

Another Look at the Conventions ...

This year’s national political conventions were a magnet for everyone from corporate fatcats and the politicians they fund to protesters clamoring about the failures of the Bush administration and the two-party electoral system. According to estimates from the watchdog group Public Citizen, some 175 companies gave more than \$115 million to help pay for the rock concert-like conventions. While the media focused on the carefully staged, four-day-long infomercials for Barack Obama and John McCain that took place inside the conventions, protesters in the streets of Denver and St. Paul found themselves face to face with a lavishly funded police state, while both parties turned a deaf ear.

DNC	\$50 million	Total money allocated by Congress for security at the DNC
	7,000	Number of people in the Aug. 27 antiwar march
	154	Number of protesters arrested during DNC
RNC	\$50 million	Total money allocated by Congress for security at the RNC
	8	Number of organizers with the RNC Welcoming Committee charged with conspiracy to riot in furtherance of “terrorism”
	21	Number of media workers arrested at the RNC
	800	Total number of arrests during the RNC
	10,000	Number of people in the Sept. 1 antiwar march
	\$300K	Estimated cost of Cindy McCain’s evening wear and jewelry at the RNC Sept. 2
	Police weapons used against demonstrators	Tear gas, pepper spray, concussion grenades, rubber bullets, flash stun grenades, tasers, batons, intimidation involving the use of police horses

HECKLERS!

Did you hear? Acceptance speeches by both Sen. McCain and Gov. Sarah Palin were disrupted by demonstrators who stood up and yelled distinct messages in the Xcel Energy Center, only to be detained quickly and escorted out by event security.

- Adam Kokesh, a 26-year-old member of Iraq Veterans Against the War and former U.S. Marine Corps sergeant, held up a sign at the beginning of McCain’s speech Sept. 4 that read, “McCain Votes Against Vets,” and then yelled, “Ask him why he votes against vets!”



- Medea Benjamin and Jodie Evans with the women’s peace group CODEPINK interrupted Gov. Palin’s Sept. 3 address. The ladies adjusted their clothes to reveal pink slips that read, “Palin is not a woman’s choice,” and stood at the side of the stage for about a minute while yelling, “Women say no to war!” and “Women need a vice-president for peace!”



Protesters at the DNC and RNC stood up to an overbearing police state in both Denver and Minneapolis/St. Paul.

But what happens when street protest becomes a self-absorbed subculture that is unable to communicate any clear message to the general public?

See the article, “This Is What Activism Looks Like,” by John Tarleton at indypendent.org and join the debate.

The GOP vs. Community Organizers

When Republicans weren’t denouncing Barack Obama as an “elitist” and “too cosmopolitan,” they were ridiculing him for working as a community organizer on Chicago’s economically devastated South Side during his first three years out of college. This is what was said:

“ [Barack Obama] was a community organizer. What in God’s name is a community organizer? I don’t even know if that’s a job.”
—FORMER NEW YORK GOVERNOR
GEORGE PATAKI

“ On the other hand, you have a résumé from a gifted man with an Ivy League education. He worked as a community organizer. What? [Laughter] ... I said, ‘Okay, Okay, maybe this is the first problem on the résumé.’”
—FORMER NEW YORK CITY MAYOR AND
REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
RUDY GIULIANI

“ I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities.”
— REPUBLICAN VICE-PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDATE GOV. SARAH PALIN,

Irked by the Republican attacks, John Raskin, founder of Community Organizers of America and a community organizer on the West Side of Manhattan, launched a website Sept. 4 to defend community organizers against Republican attacks. “Community organizers work in neighborhoods that have been hit hardest by the failing economy,” Raskin wrote. “The last thing we need is for Republican officials to mock us on television when we’re trying to rebuild the neighborhoods they have destroyed.”
Blog: organizersfightback.wordpress.com

By JOHN TARLETON AND JESSICA LEE

Antiwar IVAW Demo Blocked in Denver



About 100 members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) led a 7,000-person antiwar march toward the Pepsi Center during the third day of the Democratic National Convention (DNC). IVAW attempted to deliver a folded flag and a letter calling on Senator Obama to endorse immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, full veterans benefits and reparations for the Iraqi people. Blocks away from the DNC, the march was stopped by at least 100 riot police officers. Eventually, one member of the IVAW was allowed to pass through police lines to meet with representatives from the Obama campaign. The protest was by far the largest that took place during the DNC.

PHOTO: DNCDISRUPTION08.ORG

TALKING WITH THE GREEN TICKET

Need a break from the Republicans and the Democrats? Catch Alex Kane’s exclusive interview with Green Party presidential nominee Cynthia McKinney and her running mate Rosa Clemente at indypendent.org.



... And Then They Came for the Journalists

While most of the journalists who came to St. Paul for the Republican National Convention were safely ensconced inside the Xcel Energy Center, those who ventured outside faced a fate even worse than listening to Rudy Giuliani’s keynote speech. At least 21 media workers were arrested before and during the RNC, including *Democracy Now* host Amy Goodman producers Nicole Salazar and Sharif Abdel Kouddous (who was arrested twice). Also arrested were journalists from the Associated Press, *New York Post*, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Indymedia and other media outlets.

Journalists and protesters gathered at St. Paul City Hall Sept. 5 to present more than

60,000 letters to Mayor Chris Coleman and prosecuting attorneys, demanding that all charges against journalists be dropped. “From the pre-convention raids to the ongoing harassment and arrests of journalists, these have been dark days for press freedom in the United States,” said Nancy Doyle Brown of the Twin Cities Media Alliance. “Tragically, there are stories that the world needed to hear this week that will never be told,” Brown said. “They won’t be told because reporters working on them were sitting in the back of squad cars, were stripped of their cameras, or were face down on the pavement with their hands cuffed behind their backs.”

Three Years After Katrina, A City Still Threatened

By JORDAN FLAHERTY

The city of New Orleans — and much of southern Louisiana — was evacuated for Hurricane Gustav just days after the anniversary of Katrina Aug. 29. As residents packed their bags yet again, many feared a new wave of devastation in a city that has only begun to recover from the previous storm. As New Orleans and hurricanes once again share headlines, this moment offers an opportunity to examine how three years of disastrous federal, state and local policy have affected the people of New Orleans.

Several organizations have released powerful reports around the Katrina anniversary, examining the current state of the city. For those who have heard only uplifting stories about the city's recovery and see the orderly evacuation for Gustav as evidence of positive steps forward, the facts on the ground offer an urgent reminder of the ongoing disaster.

According to a study by PolicyLink, 81 percent of those who received the federally funded, state-administered Road Home grants had insufficient resources to cover their damages. Road Home applicants on average fell about \$35,000 short of the money they needed to rebuild their homes, and African-American households on average had an almost 35 percent higher shortfall than white households.

More than one in three residential addresses — more than 70,000 total — remain unoccupied, according to a report by the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. While workers with Brad Pitt's Make It Right project worked extra hours to finish the first of scores of planned houses in the devastated Lower Ninth Ward, the neighborhood overall ranks far behind other neighborhoods in recovery, with only 11 percent of its pre-Katrina number of households. The same report notes that since the devastation of the city, rents have risen by 46 percent citywide (much more in some neighborhoods), while many city services remain very limited — for example, only 21 percent of public transit buses are running.

A FORGOTTEN, DIVIDED CITY

The aftermath of Katrina prompted a nationwide focus on race and class divisions in New Orleans. A poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 70 percent of residents feel we live in a city divided by class and race. The Kaiser survey also found unity among New Orleanians: We are united in feeling abandoned by the rest of the United States. Eight out of 10 said the federal government has not provided sufficient support. Nearly two-thirds

think that the U.S. public has largely forgotten about the city.

A large percentage of residents surveyed indicated that their own situation has deteriorated since before Katrina. Fifty-three percent of low-income residents have been diagnosed with serious mental illnesses such as depression, a threefold increase since 2006.

There is a continuing debate about how many people live in New Orleans, and definitive figures will not be available until the next complete census. But even optimistic estimates show that 150,000 to 200,000 former residents (out of a previous population of nearly 500,000) have been unable to return. The majority of those who have been kept away are African-American.

BLANK SLATE OR BURIAL GROUND?

Much of the change in the city is being led by a new strata of the city's population — planners, architects, developers and other reformers. Many self-identify as YURPs — young, urban rebuilding professionals — in their work with countless nonprofits, foundations and businesses. Some have spoken of New Orleans as a blank slate on which they can project their ideas of reform, whether it be in healthcare, architecture, urban planning or education. What this worldview leaves out, according to some advocates, is the people who lived here before, those most affected by these changes, who have the least say in how these plans are carried out.

"It wasn't a blank slate, it was a cemetery," says New Orleans educator and poet Kalamu Ya Salaam. "People were killed, and they're building on top of their bones."

The vast majority of New Orleans' new professionals have come here with the best intentions, with a love for this city and a desire to help with the recovery. However, many activists criticize what they see as token attempts at community involvement and a paternalistic attitude among many of the new decision

makers.

For example, our education system was in crisis pre-Katrina and certainly needed revolutionary change. Change is what we have gotten — the current system in many ways bears no resemblance to the system of three years ago — but this revolution has been overwhelmingly led from outside, with little input from the parents, students and staff of the New Orleans public school system.

Shortly after the post-Katrina evacuation of the city, the entire staff of the public school system was fired. Not long after that, school board officials chose to end recognition of the teachers' union — the largest union in the city and arguably the biggest base of Black middle class political power in the city. Since then, the school landscape has changed remarkably, from staff to decision-making structure to facilities.

According to Tulane University professor Lance Hill, "New Orleans has experienced a profound change in who governs schools and a dramatic reduction of parent and local taxpayer control of schools."

The school system used to consist of 128 schools, 124 of them controlled by the New Orleans School Board. Now according to Hill, of the 88 that have opened for the fall semester, only five are governed by the elected public school board. Fifty schools have received a charter to be privately managed by self-perpetuating boards. The other 33 schools are now run by the Louisiana Department of Education through the Recovery School District.

For school reformers, who came to New Orleans to test their educational vision, this represents a dream come true. Reformers are the subject of glowing profiles in the local and national press; federal, state and city officials are on their side; and they have a massive influx of cheap (and young, idealistic) labor. Teach For America supplied 112 teachers last year and has committed 250 this year and projected 500 next year. Tens of millions of

dollars in funding is coming through sources such as the Gates and Walton foundations.

There is no doubt that some students receive an excellent education in the new school districts. However, critics are concerned that the students who are being left behind are the ones who need the most help — those without someone to advocate for them, to research their needs and to help them apply to the best schools.

According to New Orleanian Kalamu Ya Salaam, director of Students at the Center, a program for public school students that functions within the state Recovery School District, the new systems represent "an experimentation with privatization and everything that implies."

COMMEMORATION AND GRASSROOTS

This patronizing attitude of school reformers and government entities — dictating the terms of New Orleans' recovery to the people most affected — is also reflected in the way New Orleans' poorest residents were evacuated. The approximately 18,000 residents who had no means to leave the city had no choice of where they were taken during the forced evacuation. In fact, they were not even told where they were going, even after they were already on the bus. There was also no information available as to when, or if, they would be allowed back and whether they would be given transportation back to the city.

Fundamentally, policy makers do not trust New Orleanians to make their own decisions about the city. But it's been the community, not foundations or government or so-called experts, that has led this city's recovery at the grassroots. Bayou Road — a street of Black-owned, community-oriented, businesses in New Orleans' Seventh Ward — has rebuilt its post-Katrina neighborhood to include more businesses than before the storm. It hasn't been government help that has enabled these businesses to come back, but the effort of community members coming together. It was also grassroots action that brought back the membership of many cultural organizations, like the network of Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, the century-old Black community institutions that play a vital role in New Orleans neighborhood life.

On Aug. 29, the Right to the City alliance (RTTC), a coalition that focuses on urban issues such as health care, criminal justice and education, co-sponsored Katrina commemoration marches and actions in New Orleans and seven other cities. RTTC representatives explained that they see the continuing crisis on the Gulf as central to their work, referring to New Orleans as "the front lines in the struggle against displacement and gentrification in the U.S."

RTTC exemplifies organizations that have supported the struggles of the people of New Orleans by taking guidance from voices on the ground. In this time of competing visions of how to reshape this city, with the future still in doubt, that willingness to listen to the people whose lives are being affected — and to take that struggle and those lessons home to their own communities — may be the radical change New Orleans needs most.

Jordan Flaherty is a journalist based in New Orleans and an editor of Left Turn magazine.

New York Students Help Rebuild New Orleans

By ISABELLE JAGNINSKI

More than 300 New York City high school students spent part of their summer vacation in New Orleans with the youth-led organization, the New York 2 New Orleans Coalition (NY2NO). They participated in rebuilding, yard work, building gutting and community organizing. NY2NO has led nine brigades to New Orleans since February 2008, not for students to have a "Jimmy Carter experience" as one trip participant put it, but rather as a way to get fellow students involved in combating injustices within our own country.

"[During the trips] the students are exposed to an overwhelming amount of information which completely contradicts everything they thought or had heard from the media," says Alexandria Jackman, 16, a junior at The Beacon School in Manhattan's West Side. "Ideas, thoughts, and realizations begin to bubble in the student's minds."

For most students, the New Orleans trips are transformative. Many students return to New York City infuriated, after experiencing blatant racism and hearing disturbing things, such as one resident passionately describing feeling that "their government wanted them to die."

"They [the students] think that they have been lied to their whole lives or that everything is so messed up," Jackman says. "The students' perspective on all of their surroundings changes, and they become suddenly dissatisfied with the world they live in."

I went on my first New Orleans brigade with a team with The Beacon School in 2006. The first two trips were run by teachers at my school, connected to The Beacon School's Community Service Program and Katrina Class. The adults in the project had ultimate control, although students were active trip co-coordinators.

Many of us realized after traveling to New Orleans in the Beacon program that we needed a group that brought together youth from across New York City, free from the usual administrative power of teachers and principals. As a result, NY2NO was formed by several Beacon School and Laguardia High School students as a youth-led organization that could organize New Orleans trips over school breaks. Quickly the network has grown to include high school students from across the city interested in organizing and mobilizing around the parallel struggles of New Orleans and their own communities. As student organizers, we plan and run the trips and events by ourselves.

"For the most part, adults work closely with us for legal reasons," says fellow organizer Cory Meara-Bainbridge, 17, a senior at Beacon. "Chaperones [on our trips] are persons over 21 who are 'supervising'; however, they basically are members of the groups going through the same experience as the students."

Most of my own organizing skills have come out of New Orleans trips with the New Orleans Survivors Council (NOSC), the organization we work with doing gutting, yard work and community organizing. Teenagers on our trips "canvas" with NOSC, a method of organizing that was used by student organizers such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the civil rights movement. "We talk to endless numbers of people, encouraging them

to go to [New Orleans Survivors Council] meetings and let their voices be heard," says Jackman, who is also a NY2NO organizer.

Using methods fostered by NOSC, New York students learned to confront racism by encouraging students with darker skin to speak first when canvassing in predominantly poor black neighborhoods in New Orleans, in an effort to project an image of empowerment in areas where fewer leadership roles are filled by black youth.

Back in the city, NY2NO encourages student leadership in a similar way in order to combat the "adulthood" created when young people are often discredited and disregarded by older people.

"Often adults have a hard time accepting youth leadership," says Meara-Bainbridge. "It is important to have a strong support system of adults who agree with us. However, the student organizers always have the last say on decisions and the adults that we ask for advice trust us to make those decisions."

NY2NO is working to create an alternative form of education in which everybody is actively learning from each other. Our trips to New Orleans are not a classroom environment where the teacher oppresses the student and the student, by forfeiting power to the

Most students return to New York infuriated after experiencing racism first-hand and hearing from storm victims that "their government wanted them to die."



AT WORK IN THE LOWER NINTH: New York City high school students unload building supplies in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward in early July. The students participated with the youth-led group, New York 2 New Orleans, to work in solidarity with local New Orleans organizations and residents with gutting, yard work and rebuilding. PHOTO: OSCAR BJARTELL

teacher, also dehumanizes the teacher. We want everybody to be a part of discussions and to teach. For example, all our organizing meetings, trip-briefs and reportbacks are run in the form of a people's circle. In the circle, nobody is in a position of power and it encourages the group to think and feel together.

We also use consensus decision-making procedures, a process that amplifies the voice of all participants, where we all feel co-responsibility because we are solving problems that affect us and no decision can be made without the consent of everybody in the group. "In our country, its accepted that just because you agree with Obama's general opinions you allow him to make decisions," Meara-Bainbridge says, "Our alternative provides a way so that everybody is active in deciding; it allows room for growth as an active participant in the decisions being made that directly affect you."

Many students who have returned to New York City after completing a NY2NO trip this summer are excited to continue working for change. We are now trying to apply the organizing skills we learned in New Orleans to fight injustice in our own city.

"NY2NO is dealing with public housing issues, gentrification and homelessness," Jackman says. "NY2NO is working to combat classism and racism in both cities and through this move toward an egalitarian society."

With other organizations, including Picture the Homeless and New York Solidarity Coalition with Katrina and Rita Survivors, Jackman helped organize the Aug. 29 solidarity march through the Lower East Side and Chinatown to raise awareness about the parallels between New York City and New Orleans. NY2NO plans to continue collecting humanitarian aid and donations to be sent to New Orleans after Hurricane Gustav.

"We are all attempting to raise awareness of the state of New Orleans three years after the storm," Jackson says, "and how some of these key issues are prevalent here in our own city as well."

NY2NO organizer Isabelle Jagninski, 17, is currently a senior at The Beacon School. For more information, visit NY2NO.com.



NO PLACE LIKE HOME: (Above) More than 100 residents and housing advocates rallied outside the public St. Bernard Housing Development Dec. 15, 2007, in the attempt to save the 53-acre complex. The structures had received little damage, yet was demolished in early 2008 to make way for a new mix-income residential development. PHOTO: NEWORLEANS.INDYMEDIA.ORG.

FACING A GRIM FUTURE: (Right) A man stands in a boat near his destroyed car on the flooded streets of New Orleans Sept. 5, 2005, evaluating the destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. PHOTO: ANDREWSTERN.NET



THE OTHER SEPTEMBER 11THS

As the seventh anniversary of the 9/11 attacks were commemorated in New York and Washington, D.C., other September 11ths were marked around the world. Thirty-five years ago on Sept. 11, 1973, Chilean General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in a U.S.-backed coup. The coup led to a 30-year dictatorship and the disappearances of more than 3,000 Chileans. On Sept. 11, 1990, the Guatemalan anthropologist Myrna Mack was assassinated by U.S.-trained security forces. Mack had been documenting the destruction of rural indigenous communities in Guatemala. And on Sept. 11, 1977, Steve Biko, founder of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, was brutally beaten in the back of a police van. The anti-apartheid leader died in the early morning hours of Sept. 12.

FBI: NEO-NAZIS INFILTRATING THE U.S. MILITARY

A new FBI report reveals white supremacist leaders have been encouraging neo-Nazis to infiltrate the military in order to recruit and receive training. And the military — pressed for new recruits — appears to be turning a blind eye. The report details more than a dozen recent criminal cases involving active duty personnel engaging in extremist activity. Tom Metzger, leader of the White Aryan Resistance, recently said, “Now they are letting everybody in ... I would say that 10 percent of Army and Marines — they are not in the Navy and Air Force so much — are racist extremists of some variety.” The U.S. Army’s own investigators found that commanders repeatedly terminated inquiries into soldiers with openly racist connections. An U.S. Army report from 2007 details how the investigation of a suspected leader of an Alaskan white supremacist group was halted because the soldier was mobilized to deploy to Iraq.

CONTAMINATED WATER IN IRAQ LEADS TO CHOLERA OUTBREAK

The Iraqi province of Babil declared a state of emergency Sept. 8 after ten people died from an outbreak of cholera. Contaminated water supplies have become a major problem for Iraqis since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. The head of Baghdad’s water authority, Sadeq al-Shammari, says half of the city of six million lacks drinking water. Regular power outages are disrupting water supplies and sewage facilities. More than two-thirds of Baghdad’s sewage flows directly into the water supply.

QUESTIONS RAISED OVER “SUICIDE” OF FEMALE SOLDIER IN IRAQ

The parents of U.S. Army Private First Class LaVena Johnson are continuing to call for a congressional probe into the death of their daughter, in Iraq in July 2005. The Army declared her death a suicide even though the 19-year-old had abrasions all over her body, a broken nose, a black eye, burned hands, loose teeth, acid burns on her genitals and a bullet hole in her head. Her body was found inside a tent belonging to the military contractor KBR. Questions have also been raised about the circumstances surrounding the deaths of several other female soldiers in Iraq, which deaths have been ruled to be from “non-combat-related injuries” or suicide.

INTERNATIONAL

ZARDARI AND PAKISTAN: The Godfather as President

By Tariq Ali

Asif Ali Zardari — singled out by fate to become Benazir Bhutto’s husband and who, subsequently, did everything he could to prevent himself from being returned to obscurity — was sworn in as president of Pakistan on Sept. 9.

Oily-mouthed hangers-on, never in short supply in Pakistan, will orchestrate a few celebratory shows and the ready tongues of old cronies (some now appointed ambassadors to Western capitals) will speak of how democracy has been enhanced. Zardari’s close circle of friends, with whom he shared the spoils of power the last time around and who have remained loyal, refusing all inducements to turn state’s evidence in the corruption cases against him, will also be delighted.

There will be no expressions of joy on the streets to mark the transference of power from a moth-eaten general to a worm-eaten politician.

The affection felt in some quarters for the Bhutto family is non-transferable. If Benazir were still alive, Zardari would not have been given any official post. Many of his wife’s closest supporters in the Peoples Party (or the Bhutto Family Party as it is referred to by disaffected members) blamed his greed and godfatherish behavior for her fall from power on two previous occasions, which I always thought was slightly unfair. She knew. It was a joint enterprise. She was never one to regard politics alone as the consuming passion of her life and always envied the lifestyle and social behavior of the very rich. And he was shameless in his endeavors to achieve that status.

Today Zardari is the second-richest person in the country, with estates and bank accounts scattered on many continents, including a mansion in Surrey worth several million today. Many of Benazir’s inner circle, sidelined by the new boss, actively hate him. Benazir’s uncle, Mumtaz Bhutto (head of the clan) has sharply denounced him.

In the country at large his standing, always low, has sunk still further. The majority of Pakistan’s 190 million citizens may be poor, illiterate or semi-literate, but their instincts are usually sound. An opinion poll carried out by the New America Foundation some months ago revealed Zardari’s approval ratings at a low ebb — less than 14 percent. These figures confirm the view that he is the worst possible slice of Pakistan’s crumbly nationhood. The people had no say in his election. Parliamentary cabals determined the result.

A small mystery remained. Why did the United States suddenly withdraw support from Gen. Pervez Musharraf? An answer was provided on Aug. 26 by Helene Cooper and Mark Mazzetti in the *New York Times*. Officials in the U.S. State Department, according to this report, was not in favor of an undignified and hasty departure, but

unknown to them a hard-core neo-con faction led by Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Security Council, was busy advising Asif Zardari in secret and helping him plan the campaign to oust the General:

The *New York Times* reported that, “Mr. Khalilzad had spoken by telephone with Mr. Zardari, the leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, several times a week for the past month until he was confronted about the unauthorized contacts, a senior United States official said, ‘Can I ask what sort of “advice and help” you are providing?’... Assistant Secretary of State Richard] Boucher wrote in an angry e-mail message to Mr. Khalilzad. ‘What sort of channel is this? Governmental, private, personal?’ Copies of the message were sent to others at the highest levels of the State Department; the message was provided to the *New York Times* by an administration official who had received a copy.”

Khalilzad is an inveterate factionalist and a master of intrigue. Having implanted Hamid Karzai in Kabul (with dire results, as many in Washington now admit), he had been livid with Musharraf for refusing to give 100 percent support to his Afghan protégé. Khalilzad now saw an opportunity to punish Musharraf and simultaneously try and create a Pakistani equivalent of Karzai. Zardari fitted the bill. He is perfectly suited to being a total creature of Washington. The Swiss government helpfully decided to release millions of dollars from Zardari’s bank accounts that had, till now, been frozen due to pending corruption cases. Like his late wife, Zardari is now being laundered, just like the money he made when last in office as minister for investment. This weakness will make him a pliant President of Pakistan.

The majority of the population is deeply hostile to the U.S./NATO presence in Afghanistan. Almost 80 percent favor a negotiated settlement and withdrawal of all foreign troops. In early September, a team of U.S. commandos entered Pakistan “in search of terrorists” and 20 innocents were killed. Zardari was being tested. But if he permits U.S. troops to enter the frontier province on “search-and-destroy” missions, his career will be short-lived and the military will return in some shape or form. The High Com-



OUT OF OFFICE: Former President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf during the session “Three Crucial Questions for the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf” at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Switzerland Jan. 24, 2008. Musharraf announced his resignation Aug. 18. PHOTO: WEFORUM.ORG

mand cannot afford to ignore the growing anger within its junior ranks at being forced to kill their own people.

The president of Pakistan was designed in the 1972 constitution as an ornamental figure head. Military dictators subverted and altered the constitution to their advantage. Will Zardari revert to his late father-in-law’s constitution or preserve its existing powers? The country desperately needs a president capable of exercising some moral authority and serving as the conscience of the country. The banished Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry comes to mind, as do the figures of Imran Khan and I.A. Rehman (the chairman of the Human Rights Commission), but the governing elite and its self-serving backers in Washington have always been blind to the real needs of this country. They should be careful. The sparks flying across the Afghan border might ignite a fire that is difficult to control.

This article was excerpted from a longer version at counterpunch.org. Tariq Ali is an editor of New Left Review and his latest book, The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power, will be published on Sept. 15. For more, visit tariqali.org.

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American Perspective

CREATING A NEW NEW JOURNALISM



BY DONALD PANETH

Journalism in America today is a primitive craft. Corrupted by monopoly ownership, it is uninformative and belligerent. It manipulates the truth on behalf of political power, social control, money-making and military enterprises.

It is tedious, and useless, to criticize the media. They do not re-



spond to criticism. The American newspaper, for example, has been freely criticized. One of the earliest critics of the newspaper press was the novelist James Fenimore Cooper. Cooper filed 16 libel suits against newspapers between 1837 and 1845. He claimed, “The entire nation breathes an atmosphere of falsehoods ... [The press] as a whole owes its existence to the schemes of interested political adventurers.”

Later critics have been numerous — Upton Sinclair, Silas Bent, George Seldes, A. J. Liebling, James Aronson. Standards declined still further. In the past decade, the language of journalism has approached that of advertising — loud, hyperbolic and standardized.

Two remedies are available. One is to recognize that since the early days of the republic, the truth about America has been recorded in the

works of its great writers, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos and F. Scott Fitzgerald, James T. Farrell and James Baldwin. In our deaf-dumb-and-blind era, these authors speak to the remnants of humanity and selfhood within us.

The second remedy resides in the future, in the possibility of the renewal of the idea and ideal of a free press, in discarding all the elements of traditional, conventional journalism and creating a new New Journalism.

(The New Journalism is the expression of a certain moment in American journalism and history. It utilizes new techniques to cover new subjects. The first New Journalism was the penny press of the 1830s, which created the popular press. Joseph Pulitzer formulated the second New Journalism around

1886, in the *New York World*. Pulitzer combined aggressive news reporting with stunts, crusades and a liberal social viewpoint. The third New Journalism appeared in 1902. And for a decade, the muckrakers disturbed America with exposes of power abuses, monopoly, political corruption, child labor. The fourth New Journalism hit the streets in the 1960s with the black, student, women’s and anti-Vietnam War movements.)

To examine the connection between literature, events and history, I would like to refer first to Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was born in Salem, Mass., the descendant of a prominent Puritan family. He was preoccupied with the effects of Puritanism in New England, a Puritanism that was at the roots of the culture he knew.

Hawthorne’s great-grandfather had been a judge of the Salem witchcraft trials in 1692; 19 persons were hanged, one was pressed to death, 55 were frightened or tortured into confessing their guilt, and 150 were imprisoned. Hawthorne wrote of his great-grandfather in *The House of Seven Gables* and of Puritanism in other short stories and in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*.

D. H. Lawrence writes of *The Scarlet Letter* in *Studies of Classic American Literature*, “You must look through the surface of American art, and see the inner diabolism of the symbolic meaning...”

The demonic split in the American psyche was to become explicit once more after World War II in the McCarthy era, continue in the 1960s with the Vietnam War, covert actions and assassinations, and maintain itself today in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, America’s economic inequities and its numerous unresolved dilemmas.

Herman Melville, with whom Hawthorne became acquainted, was born in New York, and went to sea aboard a whaler. In *Moby Dick*, Melville charts America’s manifest destiny, delineating the nation’s crazed pursuit of superfluous wealth and illusory enemies. “All that most maddens and torments ... all the subtle demonisms of life and thought, all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified ... in Moby Dick,” Melville writes.

Perhaps the chasm between the authenticity and integrity of literature and the deceptions and inadequacies of journalism cannot be bridged. Perhaps we can only look to the moments of journalistic brilliance to be found in the work of such practitioners as Seymour

M. Hersh, Naomi Klein and Amy Goodman.

I propose a different course, however. I propose that we take inspiration from the great writers — and artists — of America, from their imaginations, their thought processes, their insights into method — to create a new New Journalism.

I propose the new New Journalism to be built daily — a huge structure of knowledge, views, criticism, inquiry, imaginative works, academic, scientific, economic, philosophical and historical presentations — on the following principles:

- 1) The new New Journalism shall be multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary;
- 2) In any particular story, article or piece, material from different fields of knowledge and experience are to be combined;
- 3) Perception and perspective are central questions. In any situation or event, what are we seeing — or not seeing? What is really going on beneath the surface? The subterranean aspects are often the most important; they are very rarely considered as part of journalism;
- 4) Other necessary considerations are comprehensiveness, getting all the significant aspects of a situation into a piece, and going from the A to Z of a subject in an encyclopedic manner;
- 5) Artists of the past, painters and sculptors, in addition to writers, can teach much to the journalist. The artist is often a seer, a prophet, like a poet;
- 6) Of the American abstract expressionist artists of the post-World War II period, each one started over from scratch, as if no work of art had ever been made before. This is what the new New Journalism must do.

The pioneers of the new New Journalism might begin with an excursion to the Metropolitan Museum of Art where the director, Philippe de Montebello, has created in the past 30 years a university of civilizations.

There the history and evolution of civilization and art may be studied, from the Etruscans to the recent Americans, Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, Franz Kline, Arshile Gorky.

The language and symbolism of their works would provide a productive approach to the creation of a new New Journalism.

Covert Ops Hit Chavez

Bush vs Chavez: Washington’s War on Venezuela
BY EVA GOLINGER

MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS, 2007

Revolution!: South America and the Rise of the New Left

BY NIKOLAS KOZLOFF

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2008

Most news from Venezuela in the United States comes filtered through the lens of our radical right wing corporate press. Through osmosis, American progressives can be heard repeating the corporate mantras like catechisms: it’s all about president Hugo Chavez, he’s against the unions and free speech, he just wants power.

The transformations taking place in Venezuela are often discussed without history or context, and Chavez himself is often reduced to the face of a power hungry state or — not much better — a petty dictator with a mild penchant for reform. Eva Golinger’s *Bush vs. Chavez* incinerates all of this semi-informed fluff and lays bare both the U.S.-led propaganda factory that constructs it and the specifics of U.S. covert operations against Venezuela.

This is Golinger’s second book on U.S. covert operations against Caracas, and she continues to crack the code with gusto. Drawing on everything from Freedom of Information Act documents to corporate press clippings, Golinger exposes the benign-sounding “National Endowment for Democracy” as a U.S. State Department front organization.

She explores military maneuvers off the coast of Venezuela (against the terrorist “Hugo the Grand”) and tackles the 25-year history of certain

Venezuelan unions’ participation in the United States’ war against the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. Partisan and hard-hitting, Golinger delivers perhaps the most comprehensive study on how Washington has been actively engaging in covert aggression against Venezuela.

Nikolas Kozloff takes a wholly different tack in *Revolution!*. Intent on mapping the policy transitions taking place in South America’s newly left governments (and their wavering neighbors), Kozloff includes the reader in his travels as he works to humanize the acronyms and abbreviations into conversations and anecdote, navigating a language of “dollarizations” and International Monetary Fund (IMF) concerns for the reader.

Throughout Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Ecuador, the policies evolve, overlapping and distinct, into trajectories shaped by both specific landscapes and the general crush of the U.S. empire. He illustrates public transit policy with stories about how many packed subway trains he watched go by before an empty space was available (spoiler alert: eight).

The reading can be a little odd when, for example, Kozloff’s interview with a retired Ecuadorian colonel with leftist sympathies reveals that the colonel also studied at the infamous School of the Americas. For the most part, however, the book effectively etches the complex cartography out from simple borders to rich climates and changing geographies.

While this reviewer’s lesser thirst for policy evolution was well quenched, the backstory of the very people, bureaucrats and radicals struggling to redirect an entire continent made *Revolution!* worthwhile. For such an ambitious undertaking, the reader is well-rewarded.

—SAM ALCOFF



Artist’s Journey to 21st Century Motherhood

By TALIA PAGE

Finding health information in New York City can be maddening — documentation and assistance are scarce and scattered. Compound that with language barriers and workers’ time constraints, and it’s easy to be lost in an alienating system. One artist is aiming to share her experience trying to have a baby with the assistance of the New York health system — and all the ensuing consequences.

I met Johanna Schwartzbeck over green tea at her Grand Street loft on the Lower East Side.

“I grew up in the pristine countryside of Austria, surrounded by forests, meadows and mountains ... it was so calm,” she told me, as diesel trucks coughed and taxi cabs honked below. The loft is filled with abstract oil paintings, colored pencil drawings and frescoes, a cat and several caged doves.

Schwartzbeck started painting at the age of 11, and studied art restoration and gilding (applying gold leaf to art objects). After moving to New York, she worked as an art restorer and now paints and practices Shiatsu massage. In her mid-40s, Schwartzbeck has been living in the city for three years with her partner, Egon Zippel. As part of a self-described quest “to be art,” she will open her home to exhibit her recent experience with in-vitro

with a foreign doctor who works on a tight budget (also found via the Internet). After months of preparation with Chinese herbs to cleanse her body of toxins (built up from chemicals she used while doing art restoration), Schwartzbeck was ready to start the IVF process.

“All in all it took about a year and a half. Lots of fertility testing had to be done, there was one month of hormone injections and vaginal pills, and five weeks of absolute bed rest. In total, I made eight to 10 trips to Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx.”

Although the process didn’t produce a baby, it was a catalyst for an artistic installation in Schwartzbeck’s home gallery and on her blog, theivf-show.com — both rare insights into a couple’s normally private life.

Schwartzbeck saved the dozens of boxes containing leftover syringes and enormous fluorescent pills, and she and Zippel documented their experience with videos, pictures, paintings and diaries.

“It doesn’t necessarily take an astronomical amount of money — we got a good deal for about \$5,000 — but with some determination I found that I had a lot of choices,” she said. “This art of technology, IVF, has revolutionized identities, culture and communities.”

Indeed, IVF technology has produced some impressive options. A child can require contributions from up to five parents: one woman to donate an egg, a man to donate sperm, a gestational mother to carry out the pregnancy and a recipient mother and father to raise the baby. And the child someone raises may not necessarily share the parents’ ethnic background.

“People are all different, of course,” said Schwartzbeck, a practicing Zen Buddhist. “That’s the beauty of it. But when it comes to a biological yearning, we seem to do anything to fulfill this desire.”

This installation, directed towards all women and their partners, is an exploration of relationships to biology, technology and partners in planning for and creating a child in the 21st century.

“What was most striking to me

were the communication differences between myself and Egon,” says Schwartzbeck, “We would see the same thing, and have completely different interpretations of its meaning. Much of my artwork explores the different perspectives and experiences that are possible in this situation.”

On a more basic level, IVF is complex and expensive, which can add to a couple’s stress when trying to conceive. On her blog, Schwartzbeck writes, “The ethi-



VERY PERSONAL: (Above) Johanna Schwartzbeck administers a hormone injection at home. (Below) The notarized pre-IVF agreement signed between Schwartzbeck and her partner, Egon Zippel. IMAGES COURTESY: theivfshow.com.

cal/moral issues surrounding IVF almost inevitably become topics of discussion (and therefore debate) among family and friends.

The repression of women is a recurring theme in Schwartzbeck’s paintings, as it is in this show. “Women’s choices are being constantly redefined, classified and legislated upon based on the politics and ideology of social, religious and government officials,” Schwartzbeck says. “This exhibit may be personal but it chips at a variety of relationships and a communication barriers, including the relationship between biology and technology. [Moreover] our relationship with technology affects our relationship with our partners. Artificial Reproductive Technology merits real attention.”

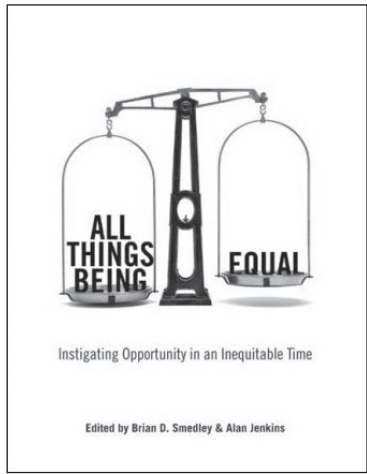
The ART/IVF Show will be on view Sept. 19-21, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at 319 Grand Street (at Orchard Street), Apartment 4. Deviled eggs and Chinese herbal tea will be served.

All Things Being Equal: Instigating Opportunity in an Inequitable Time
EDITED BY BRIAN D. SMEDLEY
AND ALAN JENKINS
THE NEW PRESS, 2007

Opportunity, write the editors of *All Things Being Equal*, is the idea that people deserve a chance to achieve their full potential. You probably agree. What’s more, you likely agree that despite lip service to the contrary, this not-so-lofty ideal is as yet unrealized.

These are hardly revolutionary conclusions, and had *All Things Being Equal* simply ticked off inequities it would be a book that had already been written. Thankfully, the collection is not a rehash; instead eight essays merge righteous indignation with solid policy recommendations about ways to close the gaps between those with opportunities and those without. Although much of the data has been presented elsewhere, the collection is a refreshingly straightforward look at righting wrongs.

Take public education. Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor at Stanford University, lays out the fundamental problem facing racially segregated urban schools:



too little funding per student. Not surprisingly, Darling-Hammond notes that “higher spending districts have smaller classes, higher-paid and more experienced teachers, greater instructional resources, better facilities, more up-to-date equipment, and a wider range of course offerings.”

In one particularly stark example, Darling-Hammond describes a California school in which students rely on photocopies instead of textbooks. The building is infested with vermin, there is no librarian, and the most recent encyclopedia dates back to 1988. Computers are nonexistent, art is not taught, and bathrooms routinely lack toilet pa-

per, soap and paper towels. More than one-third of the teachers are unlicensed and half have worked at the school for less than a year. Contrast this with a school in the Connecticut suburbs in which every kid has a laptop, the building is centrally heated and cooled, more than half the teachers are tenured and cafeteria fare ranges from sushi to salad.

Funding inequities are, of course, to blame for this disparity, in large part due to the linkage between property taxes and educational financing. That is, the larger the tax haul the better funded the school. It’s always been this way — with the wealthiest 10 percent of school districts spending approximately 10 times more per student than the poorest 10 percent — but Darling-Hammond reminds us that we can change educational outcomes by adopting the funding method used throughout Europe and Asia: giving every school the same amount per pupil.

Simple, eh?

Clearly, giving every kid an equal shot at education, long viewed as the best path to the middle class, would be a good start but people also need healthcare, food, affordable housing and jobs.

Marc Mauer, Executive Director of The Sentencing Project, writes about shifting the \$20 billion currently spent on the “War on Drugs” to efforts that benefit communities. He also addresses the challenges facing released prisoners and suggests an investment in projects that aid reintegration.

“Building strong families and communities is the most effective crime prevention program,” Mauer writes. “Head Start and prenatal care are means of improving the health and welfare of low-income families, but also provide measurable long-term benefits and reduced crime.”

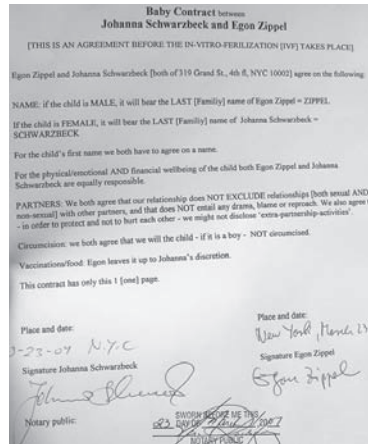
Americans haven’t talked about such things since the Great Society programs of the 1960s, but as *All Things Being Equal* reports, these ideas are neither out of date nor outmoded. “When our national policies have focused on strengthening opportunity through measures like Social Security, Pell grants, fair labor standards and federally guaranteed home loans, we have made great strides in improving our nation’s strength and prosperity,” the editors write.

One can only hope that Congress and the new president will agree.

—ELEANOR J. BADER

fertilization, titled the ART/IVF Show (Assisted Reproductive Technology/In-Vitro Fertilization).

“I realized, after the age of 40 — and after a few abortions — that I wanted, and was finally ready, to have a baby,” she explains. Like many New Yorkers, Schwartzbeck has no health insurance, so she began fertility treatment by standing in line at the Health Plus community buses in Chinatown to ask for advice. Eventually, she was granted a free health card, found the support of other women via chat rooms, and made an appointment



Reagan Legacy Counters Biblical Parable

The Samaritan's Dilemma: Should Government Help Your Neighbor?
BY DEBORAH STONE
NATION BOOKS, 2008

Several years back, the arrival of a panhandler in Henniker, N.H., sent local residents into a tizzy. Should they help the guy or would giving him a cup of coffee, a sandwich and a couple of bucks encourage malingering, or worse? The solution, said the town selectmen [sic], was to ignore this fellow human being. “If you give him food, he’ll become dependent,” they warned. “Other poor people will come to town,” they added, undermining self-reliance, gump-tion and hard work. For Dartmouth professor Deborah Stone, the debate was a referendum on community, and as she watched and listened she repeatedly harkened back to the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan. In that tale, the injunction is clear:

One should always offer help when it is needed. How had the townspeople of Henniker — virtually all of whom would define themselves as caring and moral — strayed so far from this model? Sixty years ago, she writes, the man at the center of the brouhaha “would have been taken to the jail if there was one, or to an inn or private home if there wasn’t, and there he’d be fed. Thirty years ago, a local official might even have helped him sign up for food stamps or welfare. But now, feeding a hungry man would seem to be trouble waiting to happen.” Stone rightly credits Ronald Reagan and the New Rightists who got him elected with promulgating a “help is harmful” mantra that both parties have since put forward. To wit, most Republicans and more than a few Democrats now argue against government aid. Their twisted rhetoric has been widely popularized: Social Security lets workers avoid saving for retirement; health insurance

has people running to the doctor for minor ailments; bilingual education is a disincentive to assimilation; affirmative action encourages mediocrity; and welfare, well, you



JESSE KUHN

get the picture. What it adds up to, Stone writes, is callousness, and it has a ripple effect. That is, when government is indifferent, individuals become hard-hearted, modeling their behavior on the public policies and discourse that they encounter. Worse, when messages are constantly repeated — think Cadillac-driving welfare mama — they become ingrained in the body politic. This bombardment causes us to distrust the poor and sidestep the person-to-person assistance that would have been assumed a century ago. At the same time, Stone believes that turning away from problems goes against human nature, that we have an innate desire to participate in altruistic efforts, whether they be food drives, delivering Meals on Wheels, tutoring children, or visiting the homebound. These dual pulls — to help or not to help — are at the heart of what Stone calls the Samaritan’s Dilemma. To her credit, Stone wants to live

in a society in which individuals are their neighbor’s keepers, forging bonds that cut across race, class, gender, sexuality, religion and ethnicity. What’s more, she believes government has a responsibility to encourage mindful behavior. However idealistic, it’s impossible to argue against. At the same time, the volunteerism Stone champions — perhaps to excess — can only make a dent if government is a strong proponent of public welfare since it will take more than good will to eradicate racism or diminish the need for equitable school funding or national health insurance. Ultimately, it’s the government’s responsibility to feed, clothe and shelter those within its borders. A Good Samaritan can offer a meal to a panhandler, but only the state can ensure that s/he eats on a regular basis.

—ELEANOR J. BADER

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TUES SEPT 16, 7pm • FREE
READING: "MEN SPEAK OUT: VIEWS ON GENDER, SEX AND POWER." Reading and discussion with editor and contributors about the anthology about masculinity, sexuality, identity and the role(s) of men in fighting for gender justice.

WED SEPT 17, 7pm • \$5 sugg
PRESENTATION: INCARCERATED WOMEN: CONDITIONS, PROFITEERING AND RESISTANCE. The number of women in prison has tripled within the past two decades. A panel of journalists will present their works and lead an informed discussion about lives of incarcerated women and about resistance on the inside and out.

*A Woman In Love
'Deception'*

By C. Dale Baldwin,
author of *Love Times Love*

C. DALE BALDWIN

A WOMAN IN LOVE 'DECEPTION' is one woman's account of her journey through a love so intoxicating that she can't let go. *A Woman In Love* goes through triumphs of psychotic episodes realizing her husband is more than what he seemed to be when they were married ...

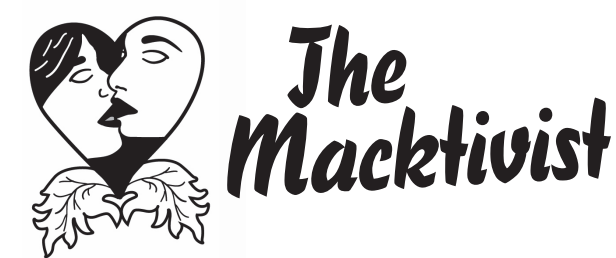
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Big Squeeze More Like a Bear Hug

The Big Squeeze
BY STEVEN GREENHOUSE
BORZOI BOOKS, 2008

Once upon a time, the major national newspapers had multiple labor correspondents covering strikes and the big contracts negotiated between industrial unions and the bosses. Today most newspapers have no labor reporters. *New York Times* correspondent Steven Greenhouse's new book, *The Big Squeeze*, makes the case that the media should pay more attention to the plight of the working class and the labor movement. Greenhouse's expansive book takes a probing look into the American workplace with a slew of statistics and rage-inducing personal stories. We find legions of white- and blue-collar employees overworked, underpaid, outsourced, under- or uninsured and scared of the boss. Greenhouse looks back with rose-colored glasses at the New Deal era, when corporations bought into the belief that well-paid workers fueled the consumer economy. He dates corporate America's break of the social contract to 1981, when President Ronald Reagan fired 11,345 striking air traffic controllers and replaced them with non-union workers. In place of the New Deal, a neo-liberal project emerged that favored free trade deals over protecting core American industries and cut labor costs to boost stock prices. But Greenhouse nails only part of the Wall-Street-over-Main-Street thesis. What Reagan began in 1981 was a wholesale re-ordering of the economy by emphasizing corporate profits and lower wages and benefits, culminating in the dismantling of the social welfare state. Reagan's revolution came to fulfillment in the Clinton presidency. Clinton almost single-handedly negotiated away hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs in "free trade" deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement. His welfare-to-work programs got government off the hook for funding the safety net while creating vast pools of cheap labor. The low wage Wal-Mart economy was born. Greenhouse lauds good corporate bosses like at Costco Wholesale Corp. who have plenty to say about Wal-Mart's abusive labor practices, but he fails to understand the market forces that created the beast. Driving corporate America's anti-worker attitude are the forces of globalization, which he describes as "the historical process in which nations and their economies are being bound ever more closely together." However, "Wall-Street-over-Main-Street" is euphemistic for class war, and the globalization he describes is less an organic historical process than a calculated way to redistribute prosperity upwards.

—BENNETT BAUMER



Trash the World Can Handle

Dear Macktivist,
I have a dream: to see my partner dance in a really slutty outfit to celebrate my upcoming birthday. I have pretty specific ideas about what will turn me on — boots, a corset, sexy panties, etc. — but as much as I want to play out my fantasy I also want her to feel like a million bucks. Unfortunately a million bucks is another thing I don't have. Can you help me to figure out how to dress my girl like a classy whore without breaking the bank?

—MY LADY NEEDS INTIMATES, MAINLY NAUGHTY OR TRASHY



Dear MLNI,
In an age rife with ecological instability, I'd like to applaud your efforts to cultivate the kind of trash this world could use. Tarting up the one we love is an all-too-rare chance to invite our partners into our fantasies and an opportunity for them to explore safe and dirty possibilities behind an indefatigable mesh façade.

For those hesitant to buy someone else's peek-a-boo panties, here is an inspirational quote from Dolly Parton: "There was this lady ... She had this beautiful peroxide hair and had it piled on her head, red nails, high heel shoes, and I just thought she was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen. And mama said, 'Oh she ain't nothin' but trash.' So, I thought, 'That's what I wanna be mama, I wanna be trash!'"

Hello Dolly! How you sing out loud what is whispered in our hearts! The be-jugged one also offers this caution: "You'd be surprised how much it costs to look this cheap!" Let's pick up where Dolly left off.

BOOTS: Since you have a (wet) dream to watch your lady dance, let's go for slutty and comfortable. The great news here is that

many of your standard platform (not stiletto) fetish boots are pretty comfortable even for those unaccustomed to walking six inches above ground. Ponytrot — don't walk — to the shoe corridor on 8th Street. I highly recommend the Village Shoe Revue (29 W. 8th St.). A pair of panty-line thigh-high vinyl boots will only hurt you \$75!

CORSET: Maybe the pro-doms know something that I don't (and speak up if you do!), but a cheap corset is not easy things to find. The cheaper you go, the more function you lose: zippers, not lacing; piping, not whalebone; and so on. Corsets are a complex piece of technology, so whenever possible, just hand the college fund over. Good old reliable Trash and Vaudeville (4 St. Mark's Place) has a salivatory sale rack stocked with three or four corsets to choose from. Corsets can be bought for \$30 to \$70 and promise to hold in and offer up the proper bits. The store also has an amazing shoe store in its basement where more fetish boots may be fondled.

PANTIES: God bless the slowly rotating panty-o-sphere at stores

like Wet Seal and Strawberry's (901 Avenue of the Americas and citywide). Go out and grab five absurdly sleazy pairs of panties for \$12.50.

ETC: Cheap and amazing, etc., is the kind of thing you can pick up at toy stores and delis if you've got the right eye. Here's my quick list: Village Paper Party Store (18 Greenwich Ave.) has an unbeatable ceiling-suspended mask selection; collars and cuffs abound at Trash and Vaudeville; slutty stockings can be captured at Sock Man (27 St. Mark's Place) and cheap sex toys, porn and lascivious help can be found at Fantasy World (192 7th Ave South).

MLNI, I tried to be both socially conscious and sleazy in my store selection, but this multiple goal was not easily met. Just promise me you won't buy American Apparel, and I'll absolve all other consumerist sins.

—R. ALVAREZ

Email your sex-related questions to sex@independent.org.

READER COMMENTS

Continued from page 2

DOUBLE STANDARDS
Response to "The Macktivist" column, August 8:
I think there is a big difference between people, usually men, who like sex with strangers outside, because that is where the strangers are (as in "bush cruising") and people, often straight couples, who like having sex with a partner outside because it's just plain wonderful. Nature is sexy, no two ways about it. There is also a big difference in the attitudes of the cops between the two different groups. Cops will often give straight couples a tap (not a slap) on the wrists and say, "Go forth and don't let me catch

you again, doing what I'd be doing if I weren't in uniform!" They will say a lot less kinder things to gay men caught in the bushes with their pants down and their private parts doing stuff "agin' God."

—PERRY BRASS

OUR OWN WORST ENEMY?
Response to "Invincible Men Crush U.S. Anxieties," August 8:
You failed to acknowledge the complex nature of these heroes, particularly in *Iron Man* and *Batman*, which is shown in both of these films' somewhat ambiguous endings. There is a deep cynicism expressed in both films about the nature of the hero and the myth

that the battle between good and evil only happens between the hero and the villain. Throughout *Batman* in particular, the Joker and Batman depend on the actions of regular folks, which both surprise and perplex the hero and the villain at times. But in the end Batman is forced into the shadows to protect a myth, a national lie to maintain hope. In contrast to your view, it seems to me that Hollyweird is actually reinforcing the notion of a nation full of insecurity and anxiety filled with larger, deeper troubles and that even superheroes cannot always protect us from our worst tendencies.

—ADRIENNE

TARIQ ALI
NORMAN FINKELSTEIN
GREG GRANDIN
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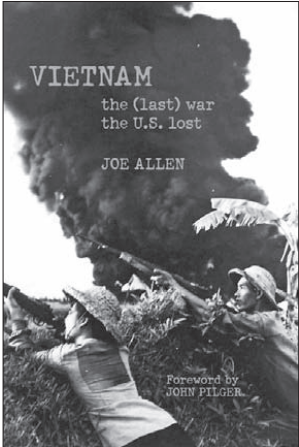
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The (Last) War the U.S. Lost
Joe Allen, foreword by John Pilger



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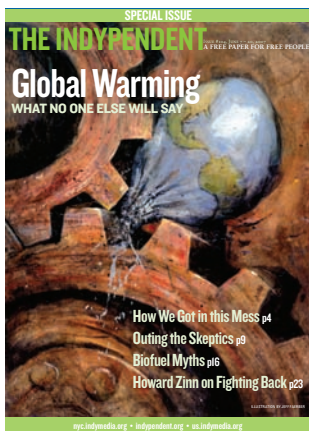
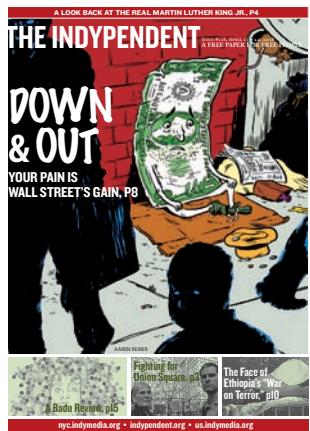
LET'S FACE IT — THIS COUNTRY IS A MESS.

The fact that many Americans want to elect another Republican administration after eight years of disastrous rule is terrifying.

The fact that Senator Barak Obama, with his pro-war, anti-civil liberties, pro-Wall Street policies is the best that many progressives hope for is depressing.

But whoever wins, there is no time for mourning. We have to organize our way out of this mess.

And that means thinking about and analyzing the problems and solutions together. Which is why independent media is so critical.



Whatever happens on Nov. 4, we'll continue to publish groundbreaking reporting and offer ideas and opinions beyond the corporate-sanctioned duopoly.

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